

First Friends Ministry Training Manual

Purpose of the First Friends Ministry: To assure that every new member of Carmel Baptist Church becomes connected to the church.

Presuppositions:

People who join a church want to become connected to that church family. By connected we mean that they develop friendships in the church and they find places to meet for ministry involvement and spiritual growth.

According to Robert Bast in *Attracting New Members*, to become fully connected in a church a newcomer needs:

- a. to develop new friendships,
- b. to become involved in a Bible study or comparable small group in the church and
- c. to find a meaningful role (ministry) in the church.

This kind of connectedness is the foundation of a healthy church experience.

Making such a connection is the responsibility of the church family as well as the new member. We can not make a new member do what is necessary to become connected. However, the church has a responsibility to the new member to provide information and encouragement in the first days of membership. Furthermore, current church members must be willing to embrace new members in its ministries and small groups. These are the places of connection.

Providing a knowledgeable, personal guide in the first days of membership can boost the chances of the new member making a connection that will stick. Matching a trained and informed guide (First Friend) to each new member will accelerate and facilitate the connection process.

Goals:

1. Facilitate a new member's connection to the church by matching a First Friend to every new family seeking to join the church.
2. Assure that those who start the new member process complete the appropriate steps for membership— new member class and baptism, if needed..
3. Refer people to appropriate Bible study classes and ministry opportunities based on an evaluation session with each new member family.
4. Evaluate the overall new member assimilation process of the church and recommend changes in other ministries that will help new members become connected more easily.
5. Close the backdoor of church participation by assuring that new members are very connected to the church up front.

The First Friend's Role

New members come to Carmel Baptist Church from a variety of backgrounds. Some come to us from fellow Southern Baptist churches, others from other denominations and others still from no church background at all. While some churches have little to no orientation process for their new members, Carmel has chosen to set new members on a path designed to insure that the new member will connect at Carmel in a way that will help them grow as a believer through Bible study, service and worship.

Your part in the new member process has three major purposes:

1. **Provide information to the new member throughout the new member process.** Carmel's new members process is not very complicated, but it can be confusing to a person who is not familiar with the process. The First Friend keeps up with the new member as they move through this process providing the necessary information to keep them from becoming discouraged or confused. The details of this process are provided in this manual. You will need to become very familiar with it so that you can answer questions accurately at any point in the process.
2. **Provide encouragement for the new member throughout the new member process.** Bad information can confuse a new member to the point that they may become discouraged. But there is another factor that is just as critical. It is the discouragement that comes through the process of embarking on a new spiritual effort. If we are successful in the new member process, many people will begin to study the Bible and participate in ministry who have never done it before. Therefore, this process can become a spiritual battle. Your encouragement should come in two forms. First, you should pray for the new member regularly. (See the prayer sheet at the end of this manual.) Second, you will need to become a friend who keeps them on this road for their own good. Our goal is not to make new members; it is to make kingdom builders. If our new member process is successful, it will ensure that Carmel's members are able to make a difference for God's kingdom in this world.
3. **Leave the new member with a sense of connectedness at Carmel.** Ultimately, we want the new member to feel like they belong at Carmel. We believe this will be accomplished when three things happen: they make new friends, they get involved in a small group Bible study, and they begin serving in a ministry. With these connections in place, the new member will have the resources necessary to grow in their faith and to live for God in a church setting.

The First Friends Process in a Nutshell:

- A. All people who request membership and go through the initial altar counseling are matched up with a First Friend. A letter is sent to the new member candidate and the First Friend.
- B. The First Friend contacts the new member candidate by phone. The First Friend clarifies the membership process, explains his or her role, gathers basic information about the person or family and arranges for a time to meet the new member candidate(s) face-to-face. The First Friend maintains contact with the new member candidate to insure that he completes the new member process. They also get to know the new members personally by inviting them for dinner or dessert.
- C. The First Friend discusses Bible study and ministry involvement options and answers any other concerns of the new member while encouraging a) regular worship attendance, b) Bible Study attendance by providing information about classes, escorting new members to a class, or whatever means necessary to connect the new member to a class and c) attendance at a new member dinner.
- D. When the new member is adequately connected in worship and Bible study and has been referred to ministry leaders for ministry participation, the First Friend completes the New Member Profile and turns it in to the church office.
- E. Six months after the new member completes the membership process, a report on the new member is generated based on database information. This report is given to the appropriate staff member or volunteer who determines the areas where the new member may be lacking connection. Every new member is called and asked to complete the New Member Connection Survey. Appropriate referrals are made as needed.

The First Friends Ministry Process in Detail

A. Altar Counseling

The first step for every person who wishes to become a new member of Carmel Baptist Church is to receive counseling from a trained altar counselor. Every Sunday at the end of each worship service the preacher will offer an invitation for people to make a decision for Christ including a decision to join the church family. Those who come forward and ask to join the church are directed to an altar counselor. The counselor will take the prospective member to a counseling room in the back of the worship center for a session that typically lasts ten to fifteen minutes. The primary goal of this session is to determine if the prospective new member is a believer. This is accomplished by asking the question, "In your personal opinion what do you understand it takes for a person to go to heaven?" The secondary goal is to gather information needed for the church database and on the person's spiritual background. If requested, this counseling session can also take place with a pastor in the church office or during a special appointment.

After the altar counseling session, the information gathered is passed along to various ministries for follow up including the First Friends Ministry. A letter is mailed to the First Friend with details about the prospective member. At this point the First Friend should make their initial contact with the new member.

B. Initial Contact by the First Friend

Within two or three days of receiving the prospective member's information, the First Friend should make a contact with the prospective member by phone to introduce himself as the person's new First Friend.

The First Friend should follow the directions on the "New Member Profile and Initial Questionnaire" form.

At this point it is important to keep in mind that new members come from a variety of backgrounds. During your initial interview, you should determine if the prospective member is very familiar with church life or if they will need more help during the new member process. This evaluation becomes a very important part of the First Friend process. Not all new members will be treated the same. You will need to gauge the receptivity of the new member to your support as well as the level of need. At this point in the process your goal is mainly to get them through the process of joining the church. Some people will complete this process very easily without your encouragement. Others may need more help but may also be bothered by your phone calls.

Tact and diplomacy are very important signs of church leadership and Christian maturity. You will need to exercise both of them to the greatest degree at this important time.

Your initial phone call should conclude with an offer to personally meet the prospective member. This meeting could range from a dinner invitation to an offer to meet at the Welcome Center on the following Wednesday or Sunday. It is important not to make the prospective member feel obligated to meet you. Some new members will already have a significant network of friendships, others will want to make a new friend

and will welcome your offer more gladly. The minimum requirement here is to do your best to have a face to face meeting with the prospective member even if just for a couple of minutes.

C. Discussion About Bible Study and Ministry Participation

The First Friend discusses Bible study and ministry involvement options. The goal of this discussion is to assure that the new member has found a place of Bible study or small group interaction and to make sure that they are on the road to ministry involvement in the church. Therefore, there are two parts to the conversation.

Bible Study Participation

Based on passages like Hebrews 10:24-25 and Colossians 3:12-16, we believe that it is impossible for one to experience significant spiritual growth if he or she is not involved in a Christian small group setting. Carmel's preferred setting for this kind of interaction is a Sunday Bible Study class. SBS classes are designed to fulfill every purpose of the church except worship (fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism). Conceivably, a person can do all God has called them to do with adequate participation in SBS and worship.

SBS classes are also the primary caring center of Carmel Baptist. Each class is organized to care for its members during a spiritual or physical crisis (pregnancy, hospitalization, extended sickness, death in the family, etc.) Although the church staff strives not to let people fall through the cracks, people not involved in one of these classes run a serious risk of not being cared for by the church during such a crisis. Therefore, if they are not already enrolled in a class, every new member is automatically enrolled in an SBS class when they join the church. If they are automatically enrolled, the new member will receive a letter telling them where they have been enrolled and the class teacher will receive a letter as well so that they can initiate a contact and encourage attendance.

Ministry Involvement

Based on passages such as Ephesians 4:11-13 and I Corinthians 12, we believe that every Christian possesses spiritual gifts which are to be used in the local church to build up the body of Christ. In other words, every member is a minister. Therefore, the second goal of the personal evaluation session is to help the new member find a place of ministry in the church. The three basic questions one can ask to help the new member in this regard are:

- Have you served in a church ministry in the past?,
- Is there a particular ministry you would be interested in?, and
- Do you know your spiritual gift?

Your finding from this conversation should be noted on the initial questionnaire form. Keep in mind that after your initial conversation with the prospective member it is likely you will have a feel for how they will be involved in Sunday Bible Study and ministry. This discussion, however, is a time to zero in on a game plan for the prospective member.

D. Complete “New Member Profile”

The First Friend's primary responsibility comes to an end when he or she makes the initial contact, follows the prospective member through the new member process, and meets with the prospective member for the personal evaluation session. At this point, the First Friend should have completed the "New Member Profile and Initial Questionnaire" and the "Personal Evaluation Session" forms. **These forms should be returned to the appropriate person in the church office** in person, by mail or by placing them in the drop slot at the welcome center.

It is our plan that at this point the prospective member has received all of the information and encouragement possible to help them find a class, get involved in ministry and make new friends. We recognize that not every new member will respond to these invitations, but by this point they should understand clearly Carmel's desire for them to completely connect to the church family in these ways.

Six Month Follow-up Screening

Each week a list will be printed of all members who were counseled six months ago. Then, a membership profile will be printed for each of these new members. The profile provides information about the person's ministry involvement and SBS involvement including information about the date they last attended Bible study. (See the sample form at the end of this manual.) A new First Friend or church staff member will be provided this information along with a copy of the screening forms turned in by the First Friend several months prior. They will then contact the new member and work through the "Six Month Follow up Questionnaire" in order to gauge the new member's present involvement and connectivity.

The primary purpose of this contact is to determine how well the new member feels connected to the church and to move them along in the process as needed. The secondary purpose of this contact is to evaluate the effectiveness of the overall new member process including the role of the First Friends Ministry, the SBS Ministry, and the follow-up related to requests for ministry involvement. The questionnaire should be completed and appropriate referrals should be made as necessary.

New Member Issues:

The following sections summarize Carmel's new member procedures and answer some common questions that new members may have about the church. Use this section as a resource during your conversations with the new member.

Also note that there is no place for entering into a theological argument with a new member. If you feel that a new member has concerns about a doctrine or practice of the church or other unanswered questions, you should refer them to a pastor for further discussion. You do this by telling them that you will have a pastor call them soon about their questions. You then need to call the Pastor or Reaching or Pastor of Edifying personally, explain the issue and ask him to call the new member. Make sure that the follow up call is made and that the new member's questions are answered.

Altar Counseling

During the invitation at the end of each worship service, attenders are given the opportunity to make a decision for Christ including a profession of faith or church membership. Those who come forward are matched up with a counselor for a ten minute counseling session. In that session the most important task of the counselor is to determine if the counselee is a believer. This is accomplished by asking the question, "In your personal opinion what do you understand it takes for a person to go to heaven?" The counselor also gathers personal information about the person making the decision including address, phone number and church background.

Ways to Join the Church

At Carmel Baptist Church there are four ways to join: profession of faith/baptism, baptism, statement of faith, and transfer of letter.

- **Profession of Faith/Baptism--** New members who join by profession of faith are publicly declaring that they have accepted Christ as their Savior. These new members have never been a member of a church before and they have never been baptized. The next time the church baptizes, these new members will be called and invited to participate. To complete the new member process, these new members will need to complete the new member class and be baptized.
- **Baptism—**New members who join by baptism have already accepted Jesus Christ as Savior but have not been baptized by immersion. Usually, these new member candidates have been baptized in the past by sprinkling (as an adult or infant) and were members in a denomination that practices infant baptism. To complete the new member process, these new members will need to complete the new member class and be baptized.
- **Statement of Faith—**New members who join by statement of faith are saying that they have accepted Christ as their Savior and that they have been baptized by immersion, but they are not members of a Baptist church. These candidates either do not have a current membership in a church or they are coming to Carmel but from a non-Baptist denomination that practices believer's baptism. Therefore, they are giving us their "statement" that they are believers and that they have been

baptized appropriately. To complete the new member process, they will need to complete the new member's class.

- **Transfer of Letter**—New members who join by transfer of letter are transferring their membership to Carmel from another Baptist church. (It is not required that the previous membership be at a Southern Baptist church.) Therefore, they have already accepted Christ as Savior and have been baptized by immersion. Carmel will write their former church a letter requesting their membership. To complete the new member process these candidates must complete the new member class.

New Member Requirements and Presentation

According to the bylaws of Carmel Baptist Church, every new member must complete a new member class. Adults must attend the two classes offered on Sundays.

Children are required to attend the children's ministry's four-week Discovery Class which is offered several times a year.

Carmel Baptist's bylaws also require that all new members be presented to the church for membership. Whereas in the past, the new member had to come forward at the invitation to be personally presented, we now introduce the new member to the church by showing their picture on screen at the end of each worship service. The new member does not need to come forward. The church office keeps a record of when they have completed new member class and/or baptism and presents them when they have done so. The new member is officially voted on by the church at a subsequent business meeting and that vote makes their membership official.

New Member Class

The adult new member class is divided into two sessions: "Introducing Carmel Baptist" and "Southern Baptists & What We Believe." The sessions are offered on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in room A135. The two weeks are taught alternately each Sunday. Therefore, if a person attends two consecutive weeks, they will complete the class in the fastest possible time. If they miss a session, they will need to determine when that session will be offered again and attend on that Sunday in order to complete the class. Children who have already made a profession of faith and have been baptized are required to attend this class with their parents. Youth are also required to attend with their parents.

Children's Discovery Class

After a child makes a profession of faith, the children's ministry will contact the family to schedule a child's attendance in the four-week Discovery Class. Parents are encouraged to attend these classes with their children. The class is designed to help the parents evaluate their child's understanding of the gospel and readiness to be baptized. Once children complete the class, baptism will be scheduled.

Baptism

Baptism is a requirement for church membership at Carmel. All members must have been baptized by immersion after they accepted Christ as their Savior. Prospective members who need to be baptized will be contacted by the church office or a member of the Baptism Committee a week prior to a baptism observance in order to schedule their

baptism. Carmel typically includes baptism as a part of the worship service on the first Sunday of each month.

Baptism candidates need to arrive at room A135 twenty minutes prior to the start of the worship service in which they are going to be baptized. The minister will meet the baptismal candidates in that room and will explain the baptism process before escorting them to the dressing rooms. Members of the Baptism Committee assist the baptism candidates with getting dressed and ready for the baptism service.

Since questions about baptism are very commonly asked by new members, you will find Bible study notes explaining why we baptize the way we do at the end of this manual. Feel free to copy and give it to new members. You may also listen to or refer new members to the online Bible study at the Carmel Edifying Ministry web site (www.carmelbaptist.org/edifying and click on “Online Studies”).

New Member Dinner with the Staff

Roughly once a quarter, the First Friends ministry sponsors a dinner for all new and prospective members and the church staff. This dinner, typically held on a Sunday evening, is designed to help the new member make a personal connection with the senior pastor and other staff members. It also helps the staff get to know the new members.

First Friends should be on the lookout for promotion of this event in the weekly Carmel News so that they can encourage their perspective members to attend the event. It is not necessary for the First Friend to attend unless his attendance will cause the prospective member to attend as well. Reservations for this dinner should be made in advance.

At the dinner, the pastor will express his desire for the prospective member to completely connect to the church family. He will also tell about his family and personal history, review the church mission statement and explain his vision for the future of our church family.

This dinner is not a requirement for membership, but it is a highly recommended part of the process.

Sunday Bible Study Ministry

Based on passages like Hebrews 10:24-25 and I Corinthians 12, we believe that it is impossible for one to experience significant spiritual growth if he or she is not involved in a Christian small group setting. Carmel’s preferred setting for this kind of interaction is a Sunday Bible Study class. SBS classes are designed to fulfill every purpose of the church except worship (fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism). Conceivably, a person can do all God has called them to do with adequate participation in SBS and worship.

SBS classes are also the primary caring center of Carmel Baptist. Each class is organized to care for its members during a spiritual or physical crisis (pregnancy, hospitalization, extended sickness, death in the family, etc.) Although the church staff strives not to let people fall through the cracks, people not involved in one of these classes run a serious risk of not being cared for by the church during such a crisis. Therefore, every new member is automatically enrolled in an SBS class when they join the church, if they were not already enrolled in a class. If they are automatically enrolled, the new member will receive a letter telling them where they have been enrolled and the

class teacher will receive a letter as well so that they can initiate a contact and encourage attendance.

The following are answers to commonly asked questions about the SBS ministry:

What are the Goals of the Bible Study Ministry of the church?

We sum it up in three words: REACHING, TEACHING and MINISTERING. All of our classes are organized to reach more people for life-changing Bible study, to teach the Bible clearly and accurately, and to minister to each other through hands-on helping and prayer.

Is this the place to get to know people?

Yes! Carmel Baptist is a very large church, so new people often ask, "How do I get to know other people." Our answer is, "Sunday Bible Study." These classes are small group fellowships organized to minister to their members. It is the place to make new friends and find spiritual and personal support for everyday life.

How many people are involved in the Bible studies?

On Sunday alone, over 3,000 people are enrolled in our Bible study classes and on a given Sunday over 1,400 people of all ages attend. Furthermore, about 400 people serve in Bible study leadership positions such as directors, teachers, secretaries, etc.

Are the Bible study classes for church members only?

Absolutely not. In fact, a large percentage of our Bible study participants are not official members of the church.

What do you study in the classes?

In almost all classes we use Lifeway's "Family Bible Study" Curriculum. These materials help us teach the Bible to each age group according to their own developmental stage while keeping all age groups on basically the same topic. This gives families the opportunity to have weekly family devotions based on the theme using ideas provided in the curriculum.

How do I know where to attend?

This flyer should help you find your class. We divide adult classes up by age and marital status while children attend classes with others in their same grade (children and students) or developmental stage (infants through preschoolers). If you want more help finding your way around or have any other questions, you may drop by the Welcome Center on Sunday.

Other Questions?

If you have any other questions, our Edifying Ministry staff is ready to help. Just call us at the church office (704-847-8575) or see us on Sunday.

Ministry Involvement

Based on passages such as Ephesians 4:11-13 and I Corinthians 12, we believe that every Christian possesses spiritual gifts which are to be used in the local church to build up the body of Christ. In other words, every member is a minister. Therefore, Carmel's ministry leaders strive to be very sensitive and open to placing new members into their ministries. New members may request ministry involvement by using the "Ministry Involvement Form." First Friends may help the new member by completing the form for them or by giving it to the new member to complete and return himself.

Some ministry participation, such as SBS leadership or committee involvement, requires church membership. However, many other ministry positions are open to members and nonmembers alike.

When a person completes a "Ministry Involvement Form," it is copied and distributed to the appropriate staff member or ministry leader. These ministry leaders are responsible for contacting the prospective participant within a week. They will tell the prospective participant what the job entails and how to begin their involvement in that ministry.

A sample form can be found in the last section of this notebook. A listing of various ministries along with their job descriptions can also be found at the Carmel web site (www.carmelbaptist.org) by clicking on “Ministries” and “Ministry Descriptions.”

What the Bible Teaches About Baptism

There are only two ordinances in the Christian Church - Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both are instituted in the Gospels, celebrated in Acts, and explained in the Epistles. Since our Lord Himself institutes them in the Gospels, we may conclude that they are a part of the message to us. Since they are celebrated in Acts, we conclude that they belong to the practice of Christ's church. Since they are explained in the Epistles, we conclude that they are designed to be continued until Christ comes.

1. WHY BAPTIZE?

A. THE LORD'S COMMAND..."Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The word of our Lord is sufficient warrant for baptism of believers--no further authority is needed. Yet it is helpful to note:

B. THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY CHURCH...which gives the interpretation put upon the Lord's words by those who heard Him speak. We read concerning the converts on the Day of Pentecost: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." In Acts 8 we read of Philip's preaching to the eunuch from Isaiah 33. As they went on their way, the eunuch inquired if he might be baptized. As soon as he confessed his faith in Christ, Philip baptized him (vs. 38). Further examples of apostolic practice may be found in Acts 10:44-48; 16:1-33; 18:8.

2. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

A. THREE QUALIFICATIONS:

1. DISCIPLES - The evangelist was commanded to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..." (Matthew 28:19). One must be a follower of Jesus Christ.
2. BELIEVERS - "Those who had received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). The eunuch confessed his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and then Philip baptized him (Acts 8:36-38). The jailer in Philippi "was baptized; he and all his...and rejoiced, having believed in God with his whole household." (Acts 16:33-34)
3. THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT - Peter was privileged to preach the gospel to the Gentiles for the first time in history at Cornelius' home. "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who were listening to the message..." "Then Peter answered, 'Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?' And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ". (Acts 10:44-48)

B. We conclude from Scripture, then, that baptism is limited to disciples or believers or those who have received the Holy Spirit--the different designations for those who have personally received Jesus Christ as Savior (trusting) and Lord (obeying).

3. WHAT DOES BAPTISM MEAN?

The answer to this important question is concisely stated in Romans 6:3-4; "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Baptism, then, is a declaration of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The apostle could say, "I have been crucified with Christ." (Galatians 2:20) Christ's death is a death for the believer.

A. SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM -- The believer's identification is symbolized by:

1. DEATH: going down into the water -- "Baptized with His death." (Romans 6:3)=atonement for sin.

2. BURIAL: down under or submerged - dying to self -- "Therefore we have been buried with Him through Baptism into death..." (Romans 6:4a)=burial of old sin nature.

3. RESURRECTION: coming up out of the water - re-born, a rebirth -- "In order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4-6, Colossians 3:1a)

Romans 6:3-4 is not talking about water baptism, but it is speaking of spiritual symbolism behind the physical act of water baptism and identity with it is Christ. But baptism is more than a declaration of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is an acknowledgment that the old man and his ways are dead -- "Our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with" -- "That we should no longer be slaves to sin," "So we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:6)

B. BAPTISM MEANS:

1. Symbolic proclamation of what happened to me at salvation.

2. Unity with Jesus Christ.

3. Obedience with Jesus Christ.

4. Being placed into the atoning work of Christ.

5. To be free from self -- not self-centered.

** Baptism does not mean membership, salvation, receiving the Holy Spirit, etc.

4. HOW SHALL WE BAPTIZE?

A. FOUR MODES OF BAPTISM:

1. Sprinkle

2. Pour

3. Three times under

4. Total immersion - (POSITION OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF PERRINE)

B. A reference to a lexicon or to an English-Greek concordance reveals two truths: (1) Baptize is not a translation of an original Greek word. It is a transliteration, that is, bringing a word into another language without changing or translating it. The original word is 'baptizo'. (2) The lexicon meaning of baptizo is "to make whelmed, that is fully wet," "to dip". It is evident that 'baptizo' means to dip or immerse. Why then was it not so translated? Sprinkling had already been introduced in Britain, and had been widely accepted. With so great a public opinion in favor of sprinkling, the 1611 KJV translators realized a potential problem when they were putting the Bible together. This problem centered on the Greek work baptizo.

There were two factions on how baptism should be done -- sprinkle and immersion. If the KJV translators translated the 'baptizo' to mean sprinkle, they would cut off the sprinkle faction". So as not to offend either side (so they could promote the KJV) they decided to forego their responsibility and transliterate instead of translate by making up a new word in English--'baptism'. Therefore, the English word 'baptism' really has no meaning and therefore each faction could apply its own meaning and avoid further controversy.

How necessary immersion is if the ordinance is to signify death, burial, and resurrection! When the believer goes into the water, death is pictured; when he goes under the water, burial is pictured; when he comes up out of the water, resurrection is pictured. But all this symbolism is lost when sprinkling is practiced -- the very meaning of the ordinance is gone.

Moreover, the examples of baptism recorded in Scripture imply immersion rather than sprinkling. "And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water." (Matthew 3:16, see also Mark 1:9-10) Why would He have ever entered the Jordan River if John were baptizing by

sprinkling? Again we read, "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there." (John 3:23) How unnecessary to seek out 'much water' if baptism were by sprinkling. Let one more reference suffice: "And they went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him." (Acts 8:38) How unnecessary to stop at 'some water' and to go down into it, in order to get a little water to sprinkle on the eunuch's head.

All this seems conclusive to one who will bow to the authority of the Word of God. The Lord commanded that believers in Him should be baptized. In doing this the believer publicly confesses his identification with Christ in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. He also professes that henceforth his walk will be in newness of life -- that the members that once served sin and Satan will now be employed in the paths of righteousness and in the service of Christ. Such symbolic action can only be by immersion. Should one who trusts in Christ read these words, but who has not yet confessed Him in baptism, let me urge upon you the importance of obedience.

5. **BAPTISM IS A TESTIMONY TO THE NEWNESS OF LIFE**

What does this mean?

- A. New focus and purpose in life.
- B. Total dependence on God.
- C. Boldness to share and proclaim my faith to others.
- D. Casting off of sinful habits -- swearing, lusts, etc. (Colossians 3:8-10)
- E. Walking in the presence of Jesus Christ.
- F. Galatians 5:22 - The Fruit of the Spirit

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; against such things there is no law." We experience all of it - not part of it (fruit).

Therefore, this is what a believer proclaims and evidences in his own life to others.

Praying for New Members

People who enter the new member process sometimes struggle spiritually with the decisions they have made. Bad information can confuse a new member to the point that they may become discouraged. But there is another factor that is just as critical. It is the discouragement that comes through the process of embarking on a new spiritual effort. If we are successful in the new member process, many people will begin to study the Bible and participate in ministry like never before. Therefore, this process can become a spiritual battle. Your encouragement of the new member should include prayer.

One effective method of prayer is to pray according to the scriptures. With this method you read a passage of scripture and pray it, asking God to do for the new member what the scripture already indicates is the will of God for that person. The following are some scriptures you may use to pray for your prospective new member in your personal prayer time:

Matthew 6:33-34

³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

³⁴ Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Matthew 22:37-39

³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.

³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

John 17:15-17

¹⁵ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

¹⁷ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Romans 12:1-2

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

¹⁶ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Ephesians 4:1-3, 11-13

¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:9-14

⁹ For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

¹⁰ That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

¹³ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Colossians 2:6-7

⁶ As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

⁷ Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Hebrews 10:23-25

²³ Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.